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U.S. Admiral Defends Dual Command

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 — Adm. Wesley L. McDonald, who commands all United States military forces in the Atlantic region, said today that having two separate commanders for ground forces in the invasion of Grenada was "not unique."

Admiral McDonald, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, said today that ground forces in the northern part of the Caribbean island had been commanded by a Marine officer while those in southern part had been commanded by an Army officer.

Both reported to a task force commander, Vice Adm. Joseph Metcalf 3d, who was aboard ship off the coast. He reported, in turn, to Admiral McDonald. The Pentagon announced last night Admiral Metcalf had turned over command of American forces in Grenada to Major General Edward L. Trobaugh, commander of the 82d Airborne Division.

The issue of divided command was raised Wednesday by Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia and the senior minority member of the committee. He said today his question was not meant to be critical as he considered the Grenada operation to have been successful.

Intelligence Failing Noted

Senator Nunn, in a hearing on the organization of the nation's military forces, urged again that the command structure be studied for lessons learned. A longstanding military principle holds that unity of command is essential to success in battle.

In other testimony, Admiral McDonald lamented the absence of human intelligence from agents on the ground, which he ascribed to a lack of time. "We just did not have the time to get someone in," he said. "We had rough estimates but nothing concrete."

Another senior officer at the hearing, Gen. Paul Gorman of the Army, commander of United States forces in Central America, agreed, saying, "You can't do the job without human intelligence." He said aerial photographs could be taken of warehouses, for instance, but what is inside could be determined only by an agent on the ground.

Admiral McDonald said the American force was comparatively large because of the absence of detailed information on resistance the landing force could expect from Grenadians and Cubans. About 6,000 American soldiers and marines fought against 1,200 poorly trained Grenadians and 780 Cubans whose military role is still unclear.

Ordered to Prepare Invasion

Admiral McDonald said he and his staff were planning a peaceful evacuation of the 1,000 Americans, most medical students, from Grenada during the week before the invasion until Thursday, Oct. 20. Then, on Friday, he was ordered to prepare for an invasion.

He said that after his staff prepared the invasion plan, it was presented for review to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger for approval. He did not say what changes, if any, the chiefs or the secretary made.

Senator John W. Warner, Republican of Virginia, raised the issue of press coverage during the initial stages of the operation, a question that has been debated here since the invasion Tuesday morning. Mr. Warner asked why reporters had been excluded and whether Admiral McDonald had made the decision.

The admiral noted that he was in the chain of command that made the decision but did not specify where it had been made. He said reporters had been excluded to preserve secrecy and to preclude them from hampering the military operation, particularly the rescue mission.

Asked whether a small pool of report-

ers could have been included in the invasion force, Admiral McDonald said he doubted that there would have been time to arrange that. But he said that should be looked at for future operations.

Senator John Tower, Republican of Texas and chairman of the committee, told the admiral, "I think you did the right thing." He said a Cessna airplane with a television trademark on the side could have been a suicide mission aimed at the bridge of a ship.

Senator Nunn agreed that the press should have been excluded during the early hours of the operation to preserve secrecy, but said he reserved judgment on whether they were barred for too long. "Success in a military operation," he said, "depends on the support of the American people."

Mr. Nunn also wondered whether American correspondents and their editors would be willing to agree to restrictions until an operation had begun, as they did in World War II. He suggested that the press research the restriction to which editors agreed at the time of the Normandy invasion.